



The Ship [Poem]

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Hidden in the vine-leaves that we in all our power of thought are
 afraid to part.
 To rejoice for death is to mourn existence,
 As we do in the vine-covered depths of imagination,
 All secretly, all in vestigial instinct unknown to us, as animals who
 regard the world with scorn,
 Look at them, great panthers, wolves, study those eyes, they hold our
 own ancestral, proud resentment,
 Existence is the crime against the existing, and no matter who is the
 criminal,
 (The death of God, like the death of Hitler, is an affair of no
 consequence),
 This thinsness that is, all this something that could just as well be
 nothing,
 The seed or the sequoia, the neutron or the galaxy,
 What is and is and is and is and is,
 Oh, in my rage at No One to address, I cry out: Intelligence,
 (For mind is implicit in it all),
 Give over, it is enough, let existence subside,
 All that words point to meaninglessly like vanes jerked in the wind,
 Sea, land, sun, consciousness, the universe, most meaningless word
 of all (the fantastical converting into one),
 I cry out for us all, Desist, give again the void, the one word that means
 everything.

3. *The Ship*

Margery Tracy Barrow Dibb Thummell Sterling Carruth, you used to
 rattle out
 Your name like a litany, your Latin that nevertheless remained for you
 a little charm,
 You linked, you connected, a place for you in the generations of Old
 England,
 Yet you told me nothing of your family, you ran away from home when
 you were sixteen,
 A lost child whose kinship was the waifs, those Dickensian forlorn
 whom everyone must love,
 And only later did I learn that Tracy was the knight (the punk) who
 inserted the stiletto (the shiv) into Thomas à Becket,
 Or that Barrow was rector of Christ Church, tutor to Isaac Newton,
 artificer of much of the *Principia*,
 (When first I read what John Aubrey wrote of him, I was as if swept
 gently into an eddy of time by my admiration),

You in the long moment of death remembering your voyage (were they
 two? I think so) to England,
 (And now my memory comes clearer, your vessel was the *Mauretania*),
 How you crossed the shining water from earth to the great ship,
 And went forth on the dark sea,
 A child you were,
 Then an old woman dying,
 An event, an instant.

Clearly the first sailors were the dead. Why do I find here no scholars?
 (Intelligence a structure of optimism, the human error, and thus ships
 must have carried corporate earnings to Thebes.)
 The dead was placed on a dead tree at the riverside and sent on its
 voyage to the sea,
 The temple of Osiris was built with a moated pool in the forecourt, on
 which voyaged a toy boat, the Ship of the Dead, wafted
 This way and that by the currents of air that were Ra's whisperings,
 And it is told that such a temple existed in Taunton, Massachusetts,
 which I believe,
 For surely I am an Heliopolitan and Isis is my mother, and I dwell in
 the curse of Thoth forever,
 (And yet, You Jackal, Eater of Carrion, if words were inevitable in
 your numen, how more wondrously than the hieroglyphikos, the
 priest-writing?),
 And all oceans run westward in our minds,
 And if rivers appear not to, still we must cross them,
 The ferry, shadow of the sun's barque, each sundown into the dying
 aureole,
 A lingering, languishing disappearance (appearance in Dis),

I have seen the jet at 35,000 feet, a spark in the sunset, under
 Hesperus, infinitesimal,
 And then no more,

The empty acorn cupule, vacancy so vast, turning in the rivulet.
 (Akran, Goth., fruit.)

Has anyone ever set foot aboard without a dark inarticulate knowledge
 of the true cargo?
 The little last-minute hesitancy of embarkation.

Mother, I stood on the pier with you, in the turbulence of whirling
 images;

I leaned down to you, down to your words muffled by the wind;
 I watched you cross, I waved to you, I smiled and took off my hat,
 Little blonde girl frowning at the rail, your muff and shining black
 shoes,
 The flowers crushed to your chest.

4. *The Phantasmagoria*

She shook him and the boy tumbled down the stairs, bouncing oddly from side to side. A box containing a loose weight.
 At Hartford on the deck of the packet, awaiting departure, they sat under an awning and stared at the rainbow, one end of which was located in the river halfway to the opposite shore.
 The young woman, dressed in a long dark flannel skirt and a blouse buttoned at the throat with a wide white collar, held the reins with both hands, but lightly, as the carriage lurched up Hardscrabble Hill.
 The dresser was painted, medium gray enamel, a white cloth with cross-stitched hem in blue thread, a large mirror behind, speckled in one corner where the silver had flaked. A hairbrush, comb, and handmirror of tarnished silver. In the middle of the cloth lay her favorite pendant, a blue moonstone very delicately carved to reveal the face within. Decades later it was presented to a granddaughter and now lies at the bottom of the Gulf of California off Isla San Marcos.
 In the spring of 1926 she ran across a lawn, into an orchard, where apple petals fell thickly about her. She wore a short skirt, tennis shoes, a sweater, a double strand of amber beads. In the brightness her legs flashed whitely.
 Her diary. Small black-covered record books, scores of them over the decades. She wrote at a carved oval table in the corner of the dining room, next to a fern and a telephone. For fifty years she used a green Parker pen with a gold loop in the cap for suspending it on a ribbon, though she never carried it that way.
 When her first great-grandchild was born in 1970, she tried to feel glad, but it was useless. She bitched and nagged as usual. No room for great-grandchildren in her vision of the House of Reality.
 At age four she stood on a piano stool in a white ruffled dress and played a half-sized violin. The music was not preserved in the photograph. Later one of her favorite recordings—she had many—was Menuhin's performance of the concerto by Mendelssohn.
 At seven she dined at Delmonico's and marveled at the ballet girls dancing overhead, their skirts whirling in circles above the glass ceiling.